

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 135

By Henry

A RESOLUTION commemorating the Dutchman's Curve Train Wreck of 1918.

WHEREAS, we are defined by all that has happened throughout this State's history, by events both happy and tragic; and

WHEREAS, one of the most tragic events in Tennessee's history occurred in the early morning hours of July 9, 1918, when two passenger trains on the main line from Nashville to Memphis met in a head-on collision three miles west of downtown Nashville in what would become known as the Dutchman's Curve Train Wreck; and

WHEREAS, on that fateful morning, the southbound passenger train No. 1, the superior train, collided with northbound passenger train No. 4, the inferior train, on Dutchman's Curve, near the old White Bridge near what is now St. Thomas Hospital, on a ten-mile stretch of single track. The official reports state that 101 people, a number challenged many times over the decades, perished in that terrible accident, making the Dutchman's Curve Train Wreck the worst train wreck in 175 years of United States railway history; and

WHEREAS, in the hurried atmosphere of war-era Nashville, after control of all rail service had been taken over by the federal government under the United States Railroad Authority, with more trains on the move each and every day, with new and unfamiliar schedules being implemented, and with many of the railway's experienced employees away in military service in World War I, conditions may have favored this tragedy; and

WHEREAS, when the two trains collided at just after 7:15 a.m., each was travelling at more than fifty miles per hour; the resulting thunderous crash, which was heard up to two miles away, derailed and destroyed both trains and resulted in the tragic deaths of more than one hundred people; and

WHEREAS, veteran engineers William Lloyd, at the throttle of the inbound train, and David Kennedy, driving the outbound train, were killed instantly when the trains collided. The collision happened so quickly on the nearly blind curve that only one engineer had time enough to pull the emergency brake; the engineers were two of the thirty NC&StL employees killed in the wreck; and

WHEREAS, although reports differ as to how many people responded to the accident, it is widely believed that more than ten thousand people responded to the explosive sound of the wreck and the subsequent dissemination of the news of the crash throughout the communities of Nashville. Among the first responders who sought to give aid and comfort were Mrs. Louis Sperry, Mrs. Garnet Morgan, Mrs. Percy Maddin, Mrs. Harry Evans, Mrs. Ridley Wills, Mrs. Jo Howell, Mrs. Leigh Thompson, and Miss Kitty Berry, all of whom were members of "The Emergency Canteen Committee of the Nashville Chapter of the American Red Cross; the Dutchman's Curve Train Wreck was the first disaster to which the group responded, and they did so with aplomb and alacrity; and

WHEREAS, it was truly a dark day in Nashville's history, and in the history of our State and Union, one which should never be forgotten; the Metropolitan Historical Commission recently took steps to commemorate the event, approving the erection of a Historic Marker near Dutchman's Curve, which was officially dedicated on July 9, 2008, the ninetieth anniversary of the tragedy; and

WHEREAS, as one of the defining events in the vast tapestry of Tennessee history, it is fitting that the members of this General Assembly pause in our deliberations to remember the Dutchman's Curve Train Wreck and the many people who perished or were injured in the collision; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED SIXTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we hereby join together in remembrance of the Dutchman's Curve Train Wreck of July 9, 1918, and commemorate the dedication of a Historic Marker detailing the events of that sad day.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.